

*Application Serial No. 10/614,399
Reply to Office Action of June 1, 2007*

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1 - 26 (Canceled).

27. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:

providing a flocked transfer sheet, a pre-formed, self-supporting, and thermosetting adhesive film, and a thermoplastic backing film;

thereafter laminating the flocked transfer sheet, the thermosetting adhesive film, and the backing film together to form a mold insert; and

forming the mold insert into a three-dimensional shape that substantially corresponds to a surface of at least a portion of a mold;

positioning the formed mold insert in the mold;

while the formed mold insert is positioned in the mold, introducing a resin into the mold to form a molded article comprising resin and the formed mold insert, wherein the thermosettable thermosetting adhesive film is thermoset before the introducing step, wherein the formed mold insert retains the three-dimensional shape after the forming step and before positioning in the mold, and wherein a first orientation of the flock fibers before the introducing step is substantially the same as a second orientation of the flock fibers after the introducing step.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 27, wherein a softening point of the backing film is less than a temperature of the resin when the resin is introduced into the mold, wherein the forming step follows the thereafter laminating step, wherein the three-dimensional

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shape of the mold insert is self-aligning and self-locating in the mold, wherein the mold insert retains the three-dimensional shape after the forming step and before positioning in the mold, and wherein the positioning step follows the forming step.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein a release sheet is affixed to a first surface defined by the flock fibers and the thermosettable adhesive layer to an opposing second surface defined by the flock fibers and wherein the three-dimensional shape of the backing film prevents dislodgment of the mold insert from a desired position in the mold during the introducing step.

31. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein the laminating step comprises the substeps:

heat applying the thermosetting adhesive to the flocked release sheet to form an intermediate transfer, wherein the thermosetting adhesive is in the thermoplastic state after the heat applying step;

cutting the intermediate transfer into wanted and unwanted portions, the wanted portion having a final desired shape;

removing the unwanted portions leaving the wanted portion of the intermediate transfer; laminating the wanted portion to the backing film to form the mold insert.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the laminating step comprises the substeps:

contacting the adhesive film with the backing film to form an intermediate assembly, the adhesive film, after the contacting step, being located only in a desired area of the backing film and having a final desired shape for the mold insert; and

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thereafter laminating the intermediate assembly to the flocked transfer sheet, wherein a first set of flock fibers on the flocked transfer sheet adhere to the adhesive film and a second set of flock fibers on the flocked transfer sheet do not adhere to the adhesive film.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein a continuous length of the flocked transfer sheet comprises a plurality of discrete flocked regions.

34. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the thermosettable adhesive layer and backing films are each a cast and/or extruded, continuous film.

35. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 27, wherein the thermosettable thermosetting adhesive is distributed discontinuously over the adjoining surface of the flocked transfer sheet.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein, after the laminating step, a plurality of mold inserts are located on a continuous length of backing film and further comprising:

cutting the backing film to provide a plurality of disconnected mold inserts.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 36, wherein, after the cutting step, the mold insert comprises a flocked area surrounded at least substantially by an unflocked area of the backing film.

38. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the flocked transfer sheet comprises poly(cyclohexylene-dimethylene terephthalate) or PCT.

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39. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 38, wherein the flocked transfer sheet comprises a plurality of flock fibers and the plurality of flock fibers comprise at least about 25 wt.% PCT.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the flocked transfer sheet comprises a plurality of flock fibers and the lengths of at least most of the flock fibers ranges from about 0.3 to about 4 mm.

41. (Canceled)

42. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 40, wherein a substrate of the flocked transfer sheet comprises at least about 60% fibers/in² and wherein at least most of the flock fibers have a titre ranging from about 0.5 to about 20 Dtex.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 40, wherein at least most of the flock fibers have a denier of no more than about 2.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 40, wherein an antimicrobial agent is located in at least most of the flock fibers.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 40, wherein an antimicrobial agent is located on the exterior surfaces of at least most of the flock fibers.

46. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the backing film is not a textile.

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47. (Currently Amended) The method of Claim 27, wherein, during the laminating step, the thermosettable adhesive is substantially fully thermoset.

48. (Canceled)

49. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein, in the molded article, the adhesive film and backing film are positioned between the flock and the resin.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the backing film is not a fabric.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the backing film and the resin have different chemical compositions.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the mold insert comprises a carrier sheet, flock fibers, and a release adhesive adhering the flock fibers to the carrier sheet, wherein the thermosetting adhesive film is positioned between the flock fibers and backing film, and wherein, in the introducing step, the carrier sheet is in direct contact with the mold surface.

53. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:
forming a plurality of adhesive-containing areas and at least one area free of adhesive on a first surface of a backing film;
applying flock to the adhesive-containing areas of the backing film but not to the at least one area of the backing film that is free of adhesive, wherein, in the adhesive-containing areas, a thermosetting adhesive is positioned between the flock and backing film; [[and]]
forming the backing film into a three-dimensional mold insert for placement in a mold;

positioning the formed mold insert in the mold;

while the formed mold insert is positioned in the mold, introducing a resin into the mold to form a molded article comprising resin and the mold insert, wherein the thermosetting adhesive film is substantially fully thermoset before the introducing step, wherein the formed mold insert retains the three-dimensional shape after the forming step and before positioning in the mold, and wherein a first orientation of the flock fibers before the introducing step is substantially the same as a second orientation of the flock fibers after the introducing step..

54. (Canceled)

55. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 53, wherein a softening point of the backing film is less than a temperature of the resin when the resin is introduced into the mold and wherein the at least one area is free of flock after the applying step, whereby the first surface of the backing film is exposed for viewing.

56. (Canceled)

57. (New) A method, comprising:

(a) providing a flocked transfer sheet, a pre-formed, self-supporting, and thermosetting adhesive film, and a thermoplastic backing film;

(b) thereafter laminating the flocked transfer sheet, the thermosetting adhesive film, and the backing film together to form a mold insert, wherein the laminating step comprises the substeps:

(B1) heat applying the thermosetting adhesive to the flocked release sheet to form an intermediate transfer, wherein the thermosetting adhesive is in the thermoplastic state after the heat applying step;

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(B2) cutting the intermediate transfer into wanted and unwanted portions, the wanted portion having a final desired shape;

(B3) removing the unwanted portions leaving the wanted portion of the intermediate transfer; and

(B4) laminating the wanted portion to the backing film to form the mold insert; and

(c) forming the mold insert into a three-dimensional shape that substantially corresponds to a surface of at least a portion of a mold;

(d) positioning the formed mold insert in the mold;

(e) while the formed mold insert is positioned in the mold, introducing a resin into the mold to form a molded article comprising resin and the formed mold insert, wherein the thermosetting adhesive film is thermoset before the introducing step (e), wherein a release sheet is affixed to a first surface defined by the flock fibers and the thermosettable adhesive layer to an opposing second surface defined by the flock fibers, and wherein the three-dimensional shape of the backing film prevents dislodgment of the mold insert from a desired position in the mold during the introducing step (e).

58. (New) The method of claim 57, wherein a softening point of the backing film is less than a temperature of the resin when the resin is introduced into the mold, wherein the formed mold insert retains the three-dimensional shape after the forming step (c) and before positioning in the mold, and wherein a first orientation of the flock fibers before the introducing step (e) is substantially the same as a second orientation of the flock fibers after the introducing step (e).